

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NEW GENERALSTRIKE PROCLAIMED; LABOR-GOVERNMENT TALKS INCON-
CLUSIVE

REF: ROME 17325 AND 17322

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE CCU HAS PROCLAIMED A FOUR-HOUR NATIONAL STRIKE ON JANUARY 23 PRECEDED BY AN ADDITIONAL FOUR HOURS OF STRIKES STAGGERED REGIONALLY AND BY INDUSTRY. TALKS WITH THE GOVERNMENT ON TOP LABOR DEMANDS -- WAGE ESCALATION INCREASES AND PENSION REFORMS -- ARE NOT GOING WELL, THOUGH SOME PROSPECTS FOR COMPROMISE ARE PRESENT. BOTH THE NEWSPAPERS AND THE BROADCAST MEDIA CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE WORK INTERRUPTIONS AS THEIR LABOR DISPUTES REMAIN UNRESOLVED. END SUMMARY.

2. THE STRIKES RATHER CASUALLY AGREED TO ON DECEMBER 12 BY THE FEDERATION CGIL-CISL-UIL (CCU) HAVE NOW BEEN SET IN DETAIL. THE CCU HAS PROCLAIMED A FOUR-HOUR NATIONAL GENERAL STRIKE FOR JANUARY 23.

AN ADDITIONAL FOUR HOURS OF ARTICULATED STRIKES WILL BE
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CONDUCTED REGIONALLY, AND BY INDUSTRY, BY THE SAME DATE.

3. TALKS BETWEEN THE UNIONS AND MINISTER OF LABOR TOROS ON PENSIONS AND WAGE ESCALATION RATES HAVE BEEN INCONCLUSIVE. ON PENSIONS, THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO CONCEDE THAT SOME IMPROVEMENTS ARE REQUIRED FOR THOSE DRAWING THE LOWEST PENSIONS, BUT IT RESISTING LABOR'S DEMAND FOR 15,000 LIRE MONTHLY INCREASES FOR ALL THOSE DRAWING MONTHLY PENSIONS OF LESS THAN 100,000 LIRE (\$150). ON WAGE ESCALATION, THE GOVERNMENT HAS PROMISED ITS SPECIFIC RESPONSE BY JANUARY 15. TALKS ON THE SAME ISSUE WITH THE TOP EMPLOYER ORGANIZATION CONFINDUSTRIA ARE DUE TO RESUME SOON.

4. MEANWHILE, DESPITE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS AT MEDIATION, AGITATION AND WORK STOPPAGES CONTINUE IRREGULARLY AMONG THE NEWSPAPERS AND AT RAI, THE STATE RADIO-TV CORPORATION. BOTH NEWSMEN AND PRINTERS HAVE CALLED SEVERAL WORK STOPPAGES, OR HAVE "WORKED TO RULE." AS A CONSEQUENCE, NO PAPERS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED ON SEVERAL RECENT DATES, WHILE OTHER EDITIONS HAVE BEEN TRUNCATED. RAI HAS BEEN EXPERIENCING SIMILAR PROBLEMS, RESULTING IN THE CANCELLATION OF SEVERAL POPULAR TV BROADCASTS. WHILE THE ISSUES ARE PRIMARILY ECONOMIC, THE JOURNALISTS ARE ALSO DEMANDING A MAJOR ROLE IN THE EDITORIAL POLICY OF THE PAPERS AND NEWS BROADCASTS.

5. COMMENT: THE MORO GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO MAJOR LABOR DIFFICULTIES FROM ITS VERY INCEPTION. THE CHIEF PROBLEM APPEARS TO BE ONE OF PRIORITIES. THE GOVERNMENT IS STANDING FIRM ON THE NEED FIRST TO SLOW INFLATION AND IMPROVE THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PICTURE, AND THEN ADDRESS THE ISSUES UPPERMOST ON LABOR'S LIST. THE UNIONS ARE PRESSING FOR REVERSE SEQUENCE, OR AT LEAST FOR SIMULTANEOUS ACTION. UNLESS ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISES CAN BE REACHED SOON ON WAGE ESCALATION AND PENSIONS -- AND THE UNIONS HAVE ALREADY SIGNALLED THAT GUARANTEED ANNUAL WAGES IS THEIR NEXT MAJOR ISSUE FOR DISCUSSION -- THE CURRENT MORO GOVERNMENT CAN EXPECT TO FACE INCREASING DIFFICULTY NOT ONLY FROM THE UNIONS, BUT FROM THE SOCIALIST PARTY AS WELL. VOLPE

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